

On April 13th, 2000 the National Association of Broadcasters, along with National Public Radio, successfully hornswoggled Congress into passing the "Radio Broadcasting Preservation Act," H.R. 3439. They are now actively lobbying the Senate for passage of the same. Ironically, a two-thirds vote in the Senate will, for all intents and purposes, put an end to non-commercial low power FM radio (LPFM). Despite this legislative action, the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, William Kennard, continues to pursue the creation of this new, LPFM service. A radio service based upon the rules adopted by the FCC in their Report and Order, which went into effect Monday, April 17, 2000.

The broadcasting establishment claims that the LPFM service will cause unacceptable levels of interference; to which we and the extensive studies and tests conducted by the FCC strongly refute.

LPFM offers an inexpensive opportunity for community based non-profit organizations to broadcast within their locality, utilizing transmitters of 100 watts or less. Unfortunately, under the current ruling, most primary markets, like Los Angeles and New York, have no spectrum availability for such a service.

The FCC's recent lottery has determined the order in which all 50 states may apply. For five days near the end of May, the FCC will be accepting California applications for non-commercial LPFM community radio broadcasting licenses. Eligible applicants include organizations such as the "Friends of the Library," Foundations.

A Library Foundation is the perfect LPFM licensee with the potential for expanding the mission of the Library in a very efficient way, by attracting more patrons to its programs and services.

Since the passage of the Telecommunication Act of 1996, an unprecedented amount of consolidation has taken place within the broadcasting industry; making it increasingly more difficult for those of modest means to have access to the broadcast spectrum. A spectrum "Legislatively" mandated for use "in the public interest, necessity and convenience."

As the broadcast industry anxiously pursues conversion to a digital signal, motivated by the prospect of commercial returns, the non-commercial side of our community continues its search for alternative media opportunities, in order to be heard. Our non-profit sector is not able to sustain itself on the infrequent, irregular and non-primetime nature of public service announcements and the occasional guest appearances.

Where it is ok for Mickey Mouse to own ABC, for mass distribution of the Disney message; organizations, like Libraries, are infinitely more challenged when it comes to promoting their programs.

The "Foundation Stones" of the Library are applicable to LPFM. Those principals have withstood the test of time, allowing people of all faith, color, creed and financial means; access to a common resource for the benefit of us all.

Library Foundation's have a once in a lifetime opportunity to enhance their Library's mission of empowering their communities by facilitating, not only through access to information, but, through access to ourselves via our very own broadcast spectrum.

Although the information age has been developing at a blistering pace, the role of the Library seems stagnated in its outreach to the community. Our Library's lack the financial resources to promote their non-commercial programs and services competitively, through the present "Media Structure."

I believe that democracy flourishes when citizens have affordable and unfettered access to the airwaves. The purpose of the First Amendment is to preserve an uninhibited marketplace of ideas in which truth will ultimately prevail.

LPFM is part of the 200-year struggle in our country to democratize society by making information accessible to the disenfranchised. Some two hundred years ago, only wealthy men could read, publish and vote. Thanks to universal education, access to the printing plant, and universal suffrage, we were blessed with the labor movement, the women's movement, the civil rights movement and now the low power FM radio movement.

A LPFM Library Station will empower Libraries to continue as a significant force within our community's future. The on going and evolutionary process of creating locally originated programming, will afford the Library the ability to better serve and educate our communities.

The nuts and bolts of programming and operating a station, volunteer recruitment and funding are not nearly as difficult as one might think. Excellent Radio is proof of that. Initially, all that is required is an engineering report, prior to completion of the application. If approved by the FCC, broadcasting must commence within eighteen months or you forfeit the license.

Our Senators need to know that LPFM is an opportunity to give a voice to the voiceless. There is precious little room left on our broadcast spectrum. We need to use it wisely and the Library has earned the "Public Trust." The Library is clearly our finest example of a democratically accessible institution and will inspire the same ideals in LPFM broadcasting.

Time is of the essence. Libraries across America must be pursuing the potential opportunities of what "Non-Commercial Low Power FM Community Radio" has to offer, while this window remains open.